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ABSTRACT

These nine articles discuss and offer suggestions for various aspects of language teaching. In "Learning Foreign-Language Phonology: You Can't Hear It If You Can't Say It," Victor W. Mason reviews the literature supporting the proposition that accuracy of articulation is required for aural discrimination. In "Teaching Scanning," James Herbolich offers suggestions to the teacher. A technique for using films for listening-comprehension is outlined by Richard D. Webber in "Steps in the Dark." Bill Robinson lists four patterns for stating dimensions and their possible order of frequency in "How Long is a Piece of String?" The results and implications for teaching of an in-house placement test are discussed by Steven D. Spurling in "Item Difficulty on the ELU Arts Placement Test of May and September 1978 and Its Relevance to Development of the ELU Arts Program." Patricia D. Hines offers "A Model for Student Evaluation of an ESP Program." Techniques for providing low-level oral practice are described by Maria Al-Salem in "Games Teachers Play." Promoting advanced speaking skills through greater exposure to conversation is the subject of "Teaching Conversation" by William Starkey. Diana Adams-Smith calls for overt vocabulary teaching through a coherent approach in "The Acquisition of Technical Vocabulary." (PMJ)

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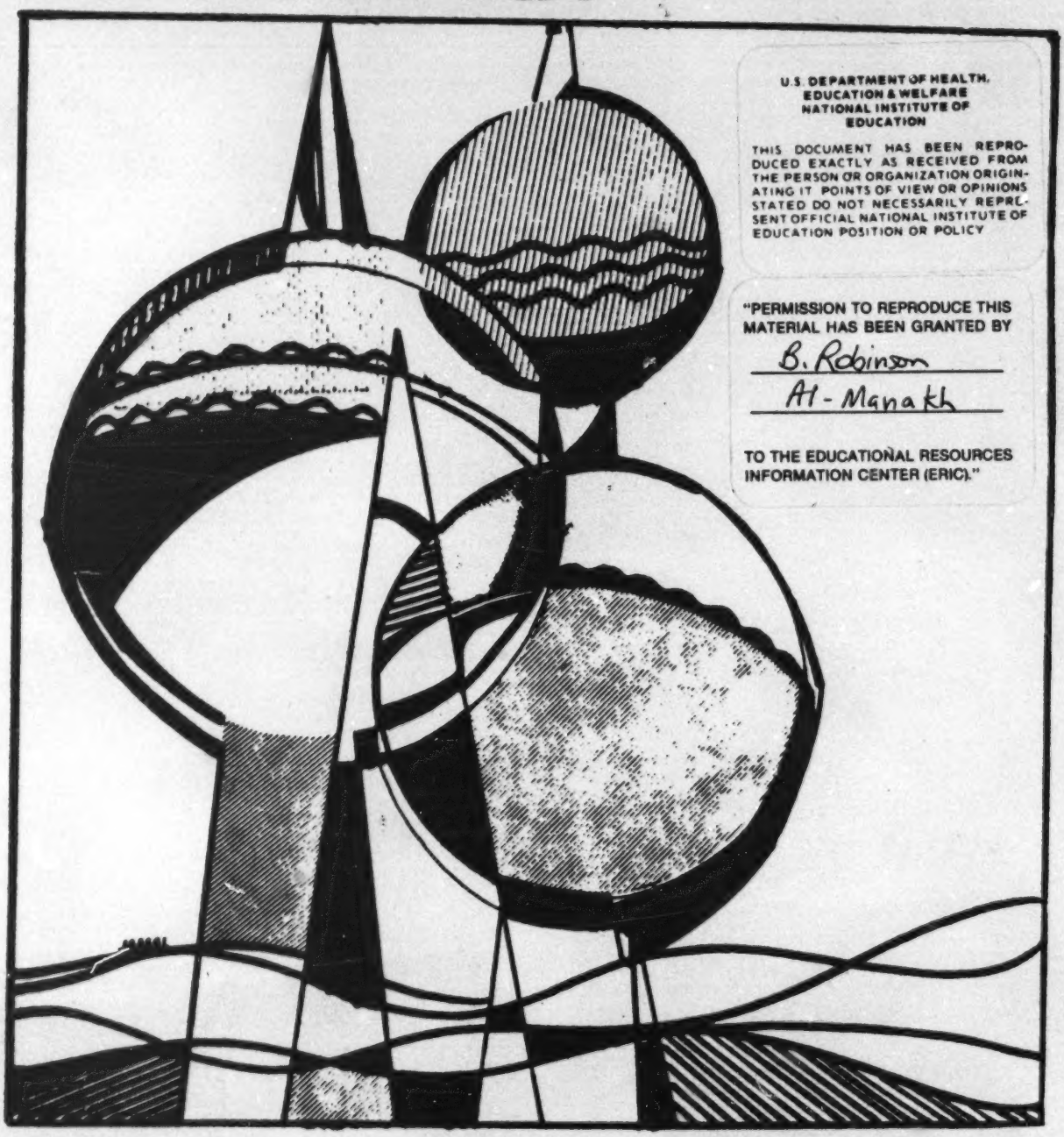

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References

[1] David Levy, BMJ, 23rd September 1978, p.889

[2] ESPMENA Bulletin 9, Winter 1977-78, p.9

[3] See ESPMENA Bulletin 4, Spring 1976, pp.20-22, for a detailed review.

[4] "Scientific Prefixes and Suffixes", compiled by John Swales, in ESPMENA Bulletin 4, pp.12-13.

EDITORIAL

Al-Manakh, despite protestations to the contrary, is still thought of as being essentially an ESP journal. As was pointed out in the last number, the flavour of the journal depends on the contributions that are received. Al-Manakh may indeed be an ESP journal in the broadest sense : that is to say that all Units are teaching English for a purpose and that purpose should be clearly specified.

It should not, however, be forgotten that Al-Manakh is the journal of the Language Centre as a whole, and that English is not the only foreign language taught in the Centre. In addition to the four English Language Units in Arts, Commerce, Engineering and Science (with a combined full-time staff of over 70), there is also a French Language Unit (with a staff of 14), and an Arabic Language Unit (with a staff of 6) involved in the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language. Contributions are anticipated from both these Units.

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This year sees the establishment of an editorial committee to assist the editor, as suggested by last year's editor, David Blackie, who did so much to revive Al-Manakh. It was the committee's feeling that contributions of a more theoretical and/or research-based nature should be accepted, whether or not the initial work had been carried out in Kuwait, and this is reflected in the composition of this first number in the 1978/79 academic year.

It is encouraging to find that research, even if only on a limited scale, is being carried out. As John Swales so rightly pointed out in one of his lectures to the Centre last year, research is a part of our job and should be built into our job specifications : if we want materials that are relevant to our teaching/learning situations, we should be willing and enabled to carry out the necessary research. Moreover, by undertaking research the Language Centre creates for itself a wider brief and acquires greater status and respectability both within the university and abroad.

Clive Bruton
Editor

LEARNING FOREIGN-LANGUAGE PHONOLOGY:
YOU CAN'T HEAR IT IF YOU CAN'T SAY IT.

by Victor W. Mason
ELU Engineering

A. Difficulties in Teaching Pronunciation

1. The instruction of phonology has always been a frustrating activity in the FL classroom. In theory, the number of discrete points to be learned is presumably far fewer than those for the other major components of syntax and lexis; yet phonological difficulties have seemed to many FL teachers relatively more intractable. To quote Finocchiaro (p. 56): "Of the three major areas of (the English) language, the sound system is the most difficult to acquire" by non-native speakers.

2. Contrastive analysis has been notably more successful in predicting FL errors from NL interference in phonology than in any other area of FL learning (Hocking, 88). Yet that predictive success is with great difficulty translated into meaningful progress in the classroom development of students' control over the FL sound-system, once past the beginning stages of the language.

3. The FL sound system is consequently the most likely candidate to be neglected by the harried teacher faced with numerous pronunciation difficulties in too-large classes meeting for too-few hours in a term. One can easily spend all his time trying to remedy speech problems, with little prospect for success. As Finocchiaro points out, the EFL teacher might "have to reteach the same sound a hundred times or more" to the same students! --- with comparable results each time (ibid.).

4. The psychology of the modern FL classroom, beyond the elementary level, leads to progressively less time and energy being devoted to phonology in the instruction of speaking and listening, and much more to the integrative use of the language in the four major skill-areas. After all, if students seem unable to pronounce a difficult sound or sound-sequence, why persist in that failure? It is the responsibility of the teacher to instruct his students as to the proper place and manner of articulation. The students' failure is, therefore, much more the instructor's. And many FL instructors, faced with a difficult pronunciation problem, simply do not know what to do with their students' speech organs.

5. Over-emphasis on seemingly insoluble pronunciation problems can easily lead to embarrassment, apathy and even hostility in students. Most instructors would, therefore, readily agree with Rivers (p.96) that, rather than discourage their students by being perfectionist (i.e., overly critical) during pronunciation work, FL teachers should instead promote motivation and confidence in their students through the development of competency in the oral-aural skills in gradually less manipulative drill-work and progressively more communicative exercises and contexts (Prator, 1970), regardless of the bent of that language (scientific, literary, general academic, technical, or whatever). Such reasoning, however valid, unfortunately

leaves teachers no closer to overcoming the principal phonological obstacles to effective FL learning --- simply less inclined to devote the time and energy required to correct them.

6. This paper will suggest that one very significant factor contributing to the problems of FL learners, in phonology, is a widespread misconception among instructors about the nature of the neuro-physiological processes involved in the acquisition of an FL phonology. Put very simply, it is this: most of us take it for granted that an FL learner depends more on his hearing than on his speech organs to develop control of an FL phonology. Scattered evidence from research into phonetics suggests exactly the opposite. It is here posited that this presumed misconception has been a serious theoretical obstacle to improved teaching techniques and student performance in the oral-aural skills in the FL classroom.

B. Widespread Assumptions about Learning an FL Phonology

7. Most FL classroom teachers, not being phoneticians, rely primarily upon their intuition and upon the accumulated folk-wisdom of the profession in attempting to understand how one learns pronunciation. Most hold a number of spoken and unspoken assumptions with major implications for the teaching and learning of the phonological component.

8. It is presumably fair to say that most teachers believe (a) that some FL students "have a better ear" than others for acquiring an an FL sound-system --- and that those less well-endowed by nature will simply never have much hope of making progress. This fatalistic view prevails despite the fact that all FL students, weak and strong alike, learn their mother tongues without an "accent" (disregarding minor impediments remediable by therapy).

9. Most teachers, if not all, would agree (b) that effective development of control over an FL phonology requires that students be exposed, as much as possible, to a good native-speaker model of that language. Few, however, then inquire as to why that repeated exposure even to perfect NL production, when available, fails to eradicate students' most persistent perception and production difficulties stemming from the FL sound-system.

10. From the "good ear" and "exposure" theories of FL phonological acquisition, it is but a short leap of faith to the generally unspoken and even unconscious, but widely prevalent, major assumption (c) that correct inculcation of an FL sound-system depends more on the student's ears than on his speech organs, that in phonology the proper instruction of aural comprehension should precede --- or should somehow be thought of as having primacy over --- the teaching of pronunciation. This unsubstantiated belief can no doubt be ascribed, in part, to the subtle influence of a principal, and as - yet generally inchallenged, tenet of the audio-lingual approach to FL teaching: namely, that "... the order listening, speaking, reading, writing, is the 'natural' or 'proper' order for <u>learning</u> a second language" (Rivers, p.100; quoting Starr, et al., 1960; my emphasis).

11. Support in the FL-teaching literature for assumption (c) is not difficult to come by. For example, Finocchiaro (p.55) says that the "three essential steps in teaching your students to make (FL) sounds" are (presumably in this order):

"1. Hear the sound.

2. Identify the sound.

3. Produce the sound."

Thus, recognition is presumed to precede production.

12. Strain (p.71) asserts: "...A prerequisite to developing the ability to produce significant sounds is development of the ability to recognise the significant sounds" (my emphasis). This, according to Strain, is one of "...certain propositions (teachers take) for granted, propositions (which are) based on conclusions reached in the scientific study of language..." and which he advises classroom teachers to apply to the instruction of FL phonology.

13. A final example comes from a widely-used manual of pronunciation (Prator and Robinett, 1973, p.1). Few instructors would disagree with the authors' advice to students learning an FL phonology: "Your success will depend largely on the sharpness of your ear and your ability as an imitator."

14. Lado (, .85) expresses some uncertainty on this point, however, commenting: "We do not know how much of a difference attempting to pronounce a sound from the beginning makes in learning to hear it. We suspect it does make a difference, but controlled experiments are needed before we can state this as a fact."

15. This paper maintains that assumption (c) has persisted, even where the learning of phonology is concerned, because it is unquestioned that, in general, one must listen to a sound-pattern before being able to say it (hearing before speaking). Clearly, there is no other means by which one can be "exposed" to a language, foreign or native.

16. However, this paper suggests a confusion --- stemming from an oversimplistic interpretation of the audio-lingual theory --- between classroom methodology, on the one hand, and language-learning theory, on the other. The principles of sound classroom procedure require the carefully sequenced presentation of increasingly difficult materials teaching the various skills and components (including the various morphophonemic structures suitably contextualized); those principles do not, however, account for the nature of how the human brain neurologically processes, retains and interprets the surface representations of the phonemes and morphemes of that language.

C. Revelations from the Tape Laboratory

17. This writer held all the above spoken and unspoken assumptions about the acquisition of an FL phonology until accidentally discovering that small classes of adult Japanese EFL students could not comprehend from very clearly produced tapes precisely the same materials that they had practiced more or less successfully as a group in the live lessons earlier the same day. The students were participants in intensive English classes that ran for 9 hours per day, 5-5½ days per week, for 3-4 weeks each. All the men were university graduates, mostly in engineering or business, with an average of 8 or more years of English behind them. A minority (about 10 per cent) had already spent up to a year working or studying in the United States. The size of each class (5-8 men each) permitted almost unlimited attention to individual EFL problems, the greatest of which turned out to be the English sound-system.

18. The men's homework assignments, all taped, were identical to the drills and exercises on vocabulary, grammar, idioms, and reading comprehension presented previously in class. It was thus assumed that the men would be able to do their taped homework without assistance. This assumption was quickly proved erroneous.

19. The lab exercises (recorded very clearly on reel-to-reel tape) were very much like live classroom dictation work, with two significant exceptional circumstances. 1) All recording had been deliberately done at normal conversational speed to avoid those distortions common to the EFL classroom created to "facilitate" student listening comprehension: a) unnaturally clear articulation of normally unstressed function words (in, our, a, to, etc.), vowels (schwa), and consonants (flap t, unaspirated final stops, etc.); b) excessive reduction of speaking speed resulting in unnatural separations of words whose syllable boundaries normally involve assimilations or intersyllabic coalescences*; c) atypical or inconsistent production of suprasegmental phonemes (exaggerated or erroneous intonation; abnormal phrase- or sentence-stress patterns, etc.); d) inclusion of normally deleted syllables in the stream of speech (every, finally, practically, different, police); e) inclusion of normally deleted consonants, such as h in unstressed function words (could have gone, brought her here).

20. And 2) there was no limit on time. Students could play back the troublesome passages as often as they wished.

21. Their scratch paper jottings quickly isolated their principal obstacle to effective listening comprehension: the English sound system. All grammar and vocabulary items had been clearly presented the same day, and in most cases were familiar from their English studies at the high school and university levels. The principal barrier to perception of meaning seemed in the overwhelming majority of cases to be the contextualized sound sequences of authentic (standard American) English produced at normal conversational speed in the manner of speakers concentrating on the content, not the form, of their articulation.

22. It was also quickly clear that, in virtually every case, what the men could not hear, they likewise were unable to pronounce properly as well. This finding did not at first seem remarkable; perceptive FL teachers have long noticed that there seems to be a close relationship between oral and aural difficulties stemming principally from troublesome FL phonological environments, when contextualized at normal conversational speed. Put simply, what a student cannot perceive, he generally appears unable to pronounce properly as well (if lexicon, grammar and conceptual content are held constant). Such sound-patterns, by effectively blocking or interfering with the transmission of meaning, fail to be phonemic for that individual.

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*The term "intersyllabic coalescence" refers to the speech phenomena which have elsewhere been called "phonetic syllabication." See, for example, Prator and Robinett, pp. 153-4.

23. The average teacher, to attempt to do something about these two ills, appears to have but one recourse: to work on the pronunciation problem. For example, if a Japanese student is unable either to hear or to pronounce the distinction between the following two strings:

1. He fell onto the glass.
2. He fell onto the grass.

his instructor naturally tries to remedy both the hearing and pronunciation problems by turning to the student's own articulatory organs --- not to the student's ears. Clearly, there is little else he can physically do.

24. FL teachers are generally aware that it is insufficient simply to model a sound or sequence of sounds for students. As Lado says (p.86): "As a rule, listening alone is not fully effective in teaching perception of problem sounds." In other words, students must do more than simply hear a model, however perfect. They must speak as well.

25. Yet, as Finocchiaro notes (p.53), "guided imitation of the teacher is usually not enough" either. Hammerly (p.195) maintains that it "is generally the case" that students cannot imitate problem sounds in a foreign language. According to Robinett (1972, p.80): "In teaching pronunciation, it is seldom sufficient for the student simply to imitate the teacher: the majority of students need more direct help" (my emphasis).

26. But what kind of help? The Japanese EFL students in this study had two major problems requiring assistance. 1) Initially, they frequently did not know when their pronunciation (and hearing) was wrong; they found out from a) their taped homework exercises and b) subsequent assistance from their instructors. 2) Even when they did suspect a production-perception problem, they required immediate, unambiguous and consistent feedback to inform them of the degree of correctness of their subsequent attempts at articulation.

27. One of the most significant findings from the intensive EFL classes with the Japanese was that when a student knew unambiguously that he was pronouncing correctly, he not only could concentrate on feeling himself forming his articulatory organs properly; he could hear himself saying the contextualised problem sound-sequence correctly. And another dramatic development soon followed consistently correct practice: after first hearing himself pronounce correctly, his aural perception of the self-same sound-patterns in the speech of others (live and taped) began to improve noticeably.

28. Two pronunciation problems of Japanese EFL students will serve to help illustrate. The first, quite predictable by contrastive analysis and easily remediable, is English /w/. Modern Japanese has an unrounded /w/ with the limited distribution of /wa/. Many Japanese have great difficulty in perceiving the prominently rounded English /w/ in any environment, or may confuse it with other English glides --- until forced to "feel foolish," at first, by being more demonstrative in pushing out and rounding their lips as they produce the contextualised /w/ in the previously incomprehensible utterance.

29. After producing correctly, the students 1) can quickly understand both the teacher --- say, in discriminations involving minimal pairs of words or phrases --- and their tapes; and 2) can hear and feel themselves saying the same thing. And they know entirely on their own that their articulation is correct and comprehensible to others. Sharing a student's pleased surprise at such moments is very satisfying.

30. A second EFL phonology problem, predictably shared by students of nearly all foreign or second language backgrounds, is far more complex and is totally dependent for its amelioration upon proper modelling of contextualised speech produced at normal conversational speed. That problem concerns the assimilation between a syllable-final English alveolar nasal or stop consonant --- /-n/, /-t/ or /-d/ --- with a following syllable-initial dental fricative: /ð-/ or /θ-/. (See fuller treatment of these assimilations in the appendix on page 13.)

31. The six combinations possible presented a wholly unexpected range of EFL listening and pronunciation problems for the Japanese. For, in such environments as the following:

a) In the house
b) In a house
c) at a time
d) at the time
e) at that time
f) They walk there.
g) They walked there.
h) We paid a waiter.
i) We pay the waiter.
j) We paid the waiter.

the students regularly confused article and tense distinctions until taught to produce the variety of coalescences and assimilations involved --- together with other significant features like vowel and consonant length. Even students who had already begun to develop productive control over English word-final voiced and voiceless stops (Japanese has none) and syllable-initial dental fricatives (Japanese --- like most of the world's languages --- lacks these consonants) could be expected to make many production and perception errors in tense and article usage in these extremely high-frequency environments --- as regularly occured in the students' taped homework exercises. The remedy, usually successful, was 1) proper native-speaker modelling; 2) regular reference to an invaluable enlarged colour chart of the human mouth; and 3) intensive, individualised drill of phrases in the context of meaningful utterances.

(32. It is worth noting, in passing, that Japanese, unlike most other Far Eastern languages, does have a system of surface-structure inflections for both its verbs and its adjectives --- a system which is far more complex than that of English verbal inflections. The concept of grammatical categories for tense was thus not foreign to the students. They knew what to listen for --- they were aware that the grammar they had taken down from tape was wrong --- but simply could not discriminate the surface representations of English morphophonemic structures in cases like the foregoing and in regular-verb passive constructions, such as:

k) The faulty products were returned three weeks ago.)

33. Some Japanese students made considerably more progress than others in gradually acquiring control over such difficult environments as the foregoing. Some never could produce or perceive certain especially troublesome sounds and environments. The point remains the same: if a student could begin to develop productive control over an English sound-pattern, his aural perception of meaning carried by the same sounds likewise seemed to gradually improve. Progress was "not characterised by a sudden and complete movement from wrong to right (but r)ather...a gradual change in articulatory control...." (Dickerson and Dickerson, p.15). Conversely, what he could not pronounce properly generally remained a major aural comprehension difficulty as well. The pronunciation had to be corrected first. If the instructor could not remedy the articulatory problem, neither production nor perception improved.

34. To sum up, it soon became startlingly clear that rather than listening comprehension somehow having primacy over pronunciation in the acquisition of English phonology by the Japanese, the opposite seemed true: accuracy of production preceded accuracy of perception; the latter was dependent on the former in this study, continued over a period of two years. In short, that very accuracy of perception depended on the men first hearing themselves produce correctly, not on hearing the instructor or another authentic native-speaker informant. Each student had to be his own correct model first. No matter how perfectly another could model for them, the students could not really know they were hearing accurately until they knew they were hearing themselves articulate properly --- could consistently feel their speech organs doing the right thing. And that certainty could only come in the supportive, indispensable presence of an informant who could provide repeated, silent feedback appropriate to the students' performance (e.g., head-nodding, for "right"; head-wagging, for "wrong"). Perception in the live or recorded speech of others then followed. (On that occasion, that is. Relapses were not uncommon.)

35. Phonology is, in a sense, the mortar of a language. Grammar and vocabulary are literally grounded in it, as inseparable from the sound-system in speech as a painting is from its canvas. In accounting for listening comprehension errors, much that is now attributed to inadequate learning of grammar and lexis may in fact result from the interference of poorly - or never-learned pronunciation. Where FL phonological weaknesses are evident, correction of pronunciation in meaningful contextualised speech (Bowen, 1972) seems to be the basic remedy for the associated production and perception difficulties likely to co-occur. When those contextualised problem sound-sequences carry a heavy syntactic-semantic burden, as many do in English (e.g., the assimilations with /ʧ-/ and /ʤ-/ discussed above), there is a correspondingly enormous burden on the phonology for communication purposes. And thus follows a comparable responsibility upon FL instructors and programs to do all in their power to assure the early and continued development of accuracy of pronunciation in their students.

D. Acquisition of an FL Phonology

36. The startling results from this study led immediately to the conjecture that perhaps they were not generalisable to other language groups. The Japanese have long been notorious --- for a host of cultural and linguistic reasons --- for their difficulties in learning foreign languages. Their troubles with English are legendary. Did these results therefore pertain basically only to this one language group?

37. Scattered evidence from the literature on phonetics proved otherwise. The German linguist Friedrich Kainz may have been the first phonetician to enunciate clearly the principle of the inextricable interrelationship between speaking and listening in the acquisition of a phonology. In his Psychology of Language (vol.3), Kainz gave that intimate phonological association involved in developing both aural perception and pronunciation the label "functional symbiosis" (Giet, 1961), and maintained that oral production of a new FL sound pattern preceded its aural discrimination.

38. The EFL/ESL literature contains relatively few references to this important principle. Hockett (p.64) gives it some attention, as does Paulson (p.141) in her review of Hockett.

39. Ladefoged (p.167) asserts that, "In general, people cannot hear differences between sounds until they have learnt to make these differences." He notes that Briere, in an experiment, found that subjects could unambiguously pronounce contrasting FL sounds well before learning to perceive those differences aurally, but that thereafter, if quality of pronunciation was maintained, accurate perception of those sounds improved fairly rapidly with consistent practice. Ladefoged says that correct pronunciation "almost invariably precedes perception" (p.168), adding that although it is sometimes possible to distinguish prominent FL sounds without the prior ability to produce them (e.g., trilled r's; Zulu clicks), unfamiliar FL sounds "are most usually perceived as different only after they can be produced correctly" (private communication; my emphasis).

40. Concerning the acquisition of NL phonology, there is considerable disagreement as to which has primacy, production or perception. In favour of the former, Chastain (p.105) quotes Riper as asserting that babbling not only is vitally important for babies learning to talk but is a basic remedial technique employed in therapy for "adults with defective (NL) speech." Riper is further quoted as saying: "If babies') speech sounds are to be mastered, they must be felt and heard both simultaneously and successively. The child must imitate himself before he can ever imitate others" (p.105; my emphasis).

41. Chastain says (pp.105-6) that research on NL acquisition indicates babbling babies listen only to themselves, deriving "kinesthetic excitement created by the action of producing the sounds (, an excitement) which induces repetition" --- thus, the happier and more contented the child, the more babbling. By six months of age, not only do babies produce "all possible sounds" but "all babies everywhere make the same sounds" (ibid.). Only later does imitation of the speech of others become important, as NL sounds are reinforced and other sounds unassociated with the satisfaction of the growing infant's needs are gradually extinguished (ibid.).

42. Much recent evidence, however, casts doubt on theories claiming that production precedes perception in the acquisition of NL phonology. Barton (1978), in a survey of the literature and in a study of young children under three years of age, found (p.112) "no evidence...in favour of a pre-phonological stage" of acquisition. He instead supports the view (p.113) that "children's perception is far in advance of their production," and appears (p.122) to doubt Ladefoged's claim that "there is a growing body of evidence which indicates that it is not true that the auditory level is in any sense primary" over the productive in the acquisition of NL phonology (Ladefoged, p.167).

E. Conclusions

43. This study indicated that poor listening comprehension in an FL is often the direct result of poor pronunciation---other factors being held constant---and that remedial speech correction may be the indispensable prerequisite for the improvement of both. Although consistent (aural) exposure to correct (oral) models of the foreign language being learned is essential to increasingly accurate approximations of the phonology by the speaker-learner, his success as both speaker and listener appears to depend ultimately on hearing himself pronounce the unfamiliar sound patterns correctly---not on hearing others do so.

44. If true, the proper early instruction of FL pronunciation takes on new importance. This is especially the case 1) for languages, like English, in which numerous difficult phonological environments predictably interfere with the accurate perception and production of crucial syntactic-semantic cues, for learners of a wide range of NL backgrounds; and 2) for speakers whose NL phonology is vastly different from that of the foreign language being learned (e.g., Japanese speakers learning English).

45. The bulk of available evidence points to productive ability appearing to precede perceptive ability in the acquisition of an FL phonology. This study can only claim that perceptive skills were dependent on the productive for the correction of intractable pronunciation-perception difficulties in EFL students, since all the Japanese taking part had been studying English for nearly a decade. The evidence was, however, that problem English sounds had never been truly learned, either in isolation or most certainly in contextualised speech.

46. Considerably more controversy seems to surround the question of the acquisition of an NL sound-system, with many more researchers lately coming to believe in the primacy of perception over production. Possibly the same mechanisms involved in ease of FL acquisition in young children but great difficulty for older individuals will eventually help to explain the striking contrasts in learning behaviour that researchers are currently claiming to find in the acquisition of NL phonology as opposed to FL phonology.

Appendix

Comments on the implications of assimilations between syllable-final alveolar stops and nasals and syllable-initial dental fricatives.

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The writer has never seen reference to this problem in the literature on teaching foreign languages, and would appreciate any comments from readers who have. This is the more surprising because of the high frequency of such environments and their predictable effects upon pronunciation and listening comprehension.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into great detail about all the phonetic features involved --- and unnecessary --- but, in general, when syllable- final alveolars directly precede syllable-initial dental fricatives, the resulting assimilations are formed somewhere along the inch-long span between the tips of the upper front teeth and the alveolar ridge. In every individual case, in normal speech, the two successive consonants are pronounced at exactly the same place of articulation, but where that place may be depends on the relative phrase stress of the two adjacent syllables.

Thus, in (a), p.9, the assimilation is a "perfect" one, in that in and the are both unstressed function words so the blade of the tongue fills the depression where the front teeth enter the gums --- a point roughly halfway between the normal place of pronunciation for /n/ and /ð/. In (e), however, the place of articulation depends on the degree of stress on the determiner that, so in general greater dentalisation would be expected than in (a). The case is quite different in (g) and (j), where the stressed verbals draw the blade of the tongue to the lower inside surface of the teeth, while the back of the tongue nestles against the alveolar ridge and the whole inside surface of the teeth is covered by the points of the tongue in between.

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TEACHING SCANNING

R, James Hurbolich
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Within the 098 English course for first year students in the College of Engineering four hours are devoted to the teaching of reading skills. One skill which receives attention is scanning or, in the words of Harris (1966), reading "to locate the answers to very specific questions." The following is an explanation of the technique I have used in teaching scanning to Engineering students.

Introduction to Scanning

Students are given an explanation of scanning which is taken from Harris and the three steps in scanning are discussed. These steps are: 1) "Begin with a very clear idea of what you are looking for; 2) Decide in advance what form the information is likely to take. And if it is the description of an event, the discussion of an idea, the definition of a term or the like, you should be looking for key words which would be likely to occur in such a description or discussion; 3) Pass quickly over all material that is not directly related to the information you seek."

To point out to the students that scanning is not a skill which is practised only in the English classroom, the following question is put to the students: "What do you do if you have a newspaper and you want to know who won the football match between Al-Kadasiyat and Al-Arabi?". The following discussion usually occurs:

Student: I would read the newspaper to find the answer.

Teacher: All of the newspaper?

Student: No, I'd turn to the last page.

Teacher: Why?

Student: Because I know the sports are on the last page of the newspaper.

Teacher: Then what would you do?

Student: Find the football section and then look for the names 'Al-Kadasiyah' and 'Al-Arabi'.

Teacher: Then would you read all about the match?

Student: No, I'd look for the numbers to see who won.

Through this discussion the students realise that scanning is a skill which they already practise when reading Arabic and, therefore, a transfer to scanning Engineering reading passages is usually not difficult.

To practise steps one and two of scanning, the students are given a series of questions and are required to decide on the form of the answer and to point out the key words in the question. For example,

1. Who formulated the Theory of Relativity?

   Form: Person's name; therefore, look for capital letters.

   Key Words: Theory of Relativity.

2. What is the melting point of Fe?

   Form: Temperature, therefore, look for numbers

   Key Words: melting, Fe.

3. When did scientists notice that the dam was in an active area?

   Form: Date; therefore, look for numbers.

   Key Words: scientists, dam, active area.

Scanning a Reading Passage

For a one-page reading passage, which is new material for the students, ten to fifteen questions are prepared and duplicated. The directions at the top of the page state: "Read the question carefully and understand in what form the answer will appear in the reading passage. Scan the reading and underline the correct answer. Work quickly and accurately."

At the beginning of the class, the questions are distributed and the students all begin scanning the passage at the same time. As they finish they raise their hands. To "force" the students to "pass quickly over all material that is not directly related to the information you seek", I tell the students: "Read quickly"; "You should be on the second page"; "Five students have finished"; "Quickly": etc.. After three-quarters of the class have finished, I say "Stop" and together we go through each question. A student is required to give the expected form of the answer, the key words in the question and then point out where in the reading passage the answer is found.

This procedure is followed throughout the semester and takes approximately 15 minutes - 5 minutes of actual scanning and 10 minutes to go over the questions. The rest of the class is then devoted to re-reading the same passage slowly and to discussion of concepts, vocabulary and information found in the passage.

Testing Scanning

Before distributing the scanning questions, the students are told that the scanning test will be scored according to two criteria: time and accuracy. They are also told to look up at the blackboard when they finish scanning in order to get their reading time and to record the time at the bottom of the reading passage. On the blackboard is written:

Minutes	Seconds
	0
	15
0	30
	45

and, while the students are scanning, the teacher writes the minutes on the board and points to the seconds as they pass. So, when a student finishes, he/she looks up and sees on the board the number of minutes that have passed and the teacher indicating the seconds. The student writes down the time and hands in the reading passage. A ten question scanning test is scored in the following manner:

Time	Points For Time	Possible Accuracy Score (1 point per question)	Highest Possible Total Score
0 to 2 min. 59 sec.	10	10	20
3 min.to 3 min. 29 sec.	8	10	18
3 min.30 sec. to 3 min.59 sec.	6	10	16
4 min.to 4 min. 29 sec.	4	10	14
4 min.30 sec. to 4 min.59 sec.	2	10	12
5 min. or more	0	10	10

Conclusion

As with any skill that we EFL teachers try to develop in our students, I am unsure of the extent to which scanning is practised by the students in their engineering courses. However, I have witnessed an increase in reading speed coupled with an increase in comprehension in the reading classes and I believe that part of this improvement is due to scanning. Therefore, I recommend the above technique and would be interested in the results achieved by other teachers who choose to teaching scanning this way.

Some of the quotations found in this article are from David P. Harris Reading Improvement Exercises for Students of English as a Second Language (New Jersey, USA: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966) pp.121-122.

STEPS IN THE DARK

By Richard D. Webber
ELU - Science

A Report on the introduction of films into course III

Background

At the beginning of this academic year, we introduced a film comprehension component into our III Course. This Course is a compulsory five-hour credit course using "Nucleus - General Science" (Bates & Evans, Longmans) and a fairly extensive written Supplementary Materials Book, which complements rather than extends the information presented in Nucleus. The course is generally at sentence level, although simple paragraph writing is a regular and increasingly important feature. Reading comprehension is regularly used in the Supplementary Materials Book, but it is used in the process of inculcating selected structures rather than for its own sake. Aural comprehension has been minimal and not very realistic; the teacher has read a short text and students here completed a diagram on the basis of this.

It was a recognition of the importance of listening comprehension to our students in lectures, and the realisation that we were not helping our students in this, that prompted our introduction of film comprehension into the course. Of the films which were available, those which seemed most appropriate to us were in the series "The Scientist Speaks", published by the B.B.C. These films are not all that one could wish for in modernity and camera art. However, they do adopt a lecture style of sorts and are concerned with technical topics which should interest our students.

First Trial

At first, we adopted the following procedures. The day before the film showing, students were given a list of vocabulary items from the film script which might not be known. In some cases teachers explained these words in class and generally discussed the topic of the film. In other cases, vocabulary lists were assigned as homework and no discussion of the film topic took place. Work in the film theatre was carried out in three sections. 1) The students viewed the film (10-15 minutes), 2) they took notes during a second viewing (10-15 minutes), 3) they answered six test questions (10-15 minutes). Students were asked to write short answers - often one word. To economise on use of the theatre, more than one class viewed the film at a time.

Various drawbacks to these procedures were discovered. Most importantly, students were having difficulty in understanding the film. Furthermore, the whole exercise seemed rather isolated from the rest of the course.

Second Trial

Accordingly, the following steps were taken to improve upon this state of affairs. 1) Preparations for the film became more rigorous. Discussion became more detailed. Some teachers introduced subject headings which would be useful in note-taking. (Detailed

film notes had been prepared the previous semester.) 2) The following procedures were employed during the film showing: a) during the first showing, students were asked to comprehend, note points of difficulty, and attempt to discover headings to describe film subject sections (10-15 minutes). b) students discussed points of difficulty with their teacher who suggested useful subject headings (10-15 minutes) (In order to ensure effective discussion, each class was allocated a separate film showing time.); c) during the second showing, students took detailed notes (10-15 minutes) using the suggested headings which were collected in. 3) After a time lapse of roughly four days, notes were returned to students and they were asked to answer some simple questions.

Conclusions

The new procedures had the following advantages: 1) Notes were being used in a more realistic manner. In the same way as, the night before an examination, a student might need to use notes taken during a science lecture at the beginning of the semester, so the revised procedure requires that a student remember the significance of his notes after a time lapse. 2) Students understood the films better and so enjoyed them more. 3) Student comprehension as evidenced by test marks improved. 4) The sequence "classroom, theatre, classroom" created greater continuity and a greater rapport between student and teacher.

There were two disadvantages: 1) Greater time was needed for this component of an already crowded course, and 2) separate film showing times created scheduling problems at the film theatre.

HOW LONG IS A PIECE OF STRING?

by Bill Robinson
ELU - Engineering

Here, in a possible order of frequency, are 4 patterns for stating dimensions:

STATEMENTS

A. This piece of string is 1 m. long and 5 mm. thick.

B. The length of this piece of string is 1 m. and the thickness is 5 mm.

C. This piece of string has a length of 1 m. and a thickness of 5 mm.

D. This piece of string is 1 m. in length and 5 mm. in thickness.

To these statement forms S.A. - S.D., there might be these corresponding question forms:

QUESTIONS

1. How long and how thick is this piece of string?

2. What is/are the length and the thickness of this piece of string?

3. What length and what thickness has this piece of string/ does this piece of string have?

4.* In what length and what thickness is this piece of string/ does it come? ??

Clearly Q.4 is not possible and Q.3 would be strange. Although Q.1 is probably the most commonly used, I suggest it is not the most useful for EST students. The pair S.A. and Q.1 work for certain, admittedly very common, dimensions only

i.e. long, tall, wide, thick, deep

and, as far as I can see, for only 1 parameter[1] strong,[2] - a rather limited list for a student of Science or Technology, where the discussion and determination of dimensions and parameters form such a large part of the study.

The S.A. - Q.1 correspondence depends on there being an adjectival form of the dimensional noun, typically of the long-length type. But these corespondences are available for only this limited list. The S.A., Q.1 forms are used in non-specialist and colloquial English: an EST student needs a pattern with greater applicability. (In fact, he would not wish to enquire after the "thickness" of our piece of string at all, but its diameter. There is no "how?" Q-form for diameter, because there is no corresponding adjectival form.)

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[1] Parameters are the physical properties and characteristics which determine the behaviour of a system,

e.g. the modulus of elasticity and breaking strain of a piece of string.

[2] The form Q.1 works for additional parameters e.g. "how fast/slow/ powerful...? but S.A. does not work for these.

However, the S.B. - Q.2 pair are immediately generalisable for any dimension or parameter.

(The diameter of ... is ...

What is the diameter of ...?)

Because of the widespread applicability of this pair, I feel that these are the only forms that should be taught until the student can produce them faultlessly. Only then should the S.C.-form be introduced (using have + Noun form), bearing in mind the difficulty of forming a corresponding Q-form.

But it occurs to me that there is also another reason for giving S.B. primacy, and which points to a possible teaching strategy. This form closely corresponds to the form of the mathematical statement

$$L = 1\ m.$$

The length is 1 m.

which is often made more specific by the use of subscripts

$$L_s = 1\ m.$$

The length is this piece

of string is 1 m.

and $L_{s\ max} = \infty$

The max. length of a piece

of string is infinity.

This correspondence may be exploited in the classroom by writing the mathematical equations (already familiar to the students) on the board. The S.B. form can then be added directly beneath these, keeping the "is" aligned with the "=" sign.

I would, therefore, suggest students be allowed to concentrate on learning and absorbing this pattern for dimensions and parameters, before being asked to make the be + Noun form or have + Noun form choice.

Similarly, let's delay the tabular exercise (as practice for S.A.-Q.1)

Noun-form	Adjective-form
length	?
?	wide
etc.	

which features so early in so many course books and which takes so long to de-bug. Authentic data tables use the Noun form, not the Adjective form.

ITEM DIFFICULTY ON THE ELU ARTS PLACEMENT TEST OF MAY AND SEPTEMBER 1978 AND ITS RELEVANCE TO DEVELOPMENT OF THE ELU ARTS PROGRAM

by Steven D. Spurling
ELU - Arts

During the spring of 1978, a placement test was constructed for use in the English Language Unit (ELU) of the Arts faculty of Kuwait University. It consisted of three parts: a grammar/structure part of 60 items, a vocabulary part of 35 items and a reading comprehension part of 30 items.

Only the reading comprehension section involved a discourse length task. The examinee read a passage and answered 5 questions about it. The other two parts involved sentence length linguistic tasks. Both the grammar/structure and the vocabulary section had stems of sentence length in which an alternative (one of four choices) was inserted to complete a sentence.

In the grammar/structure section the focus was on the students' ability to deal with grammatical form. This was done by holding meaning constant i.e. using the same lexical item in all alternatives and varying the grammatical form of each choice. Only one form was correct in the linguistic context of the stem.

In the vocabulary section, on the other hand, the focus was on lexical meaning. All alternatives were grammatical in the context of the stem. However, only one was meaningful. In effect, grammatical form was held constant while lexical choice varied.

The whole test was first administered in May 1978 to students who were enrolled in ELU Arts classes. This was termed the norming administration. Its purpose was to provide information about:

1. the reliability of the test
2. item statistics, and
3. cut off scores for the 5 sequentially ordered class.

The test was revised as a result of the norming administration and administered to entering students in September 1978. This was termed the operational administration. On the basis of their scores, students were placed into one of the five Arts English classes.

One of the reasons behind the construction of the grammar/structure section of the test was to provide ELU Arts teachers with information regarding enrolled and entering students' ability to handle the various grammatical structures taught in Arts as well as some other high frequency structures. The rest of this paper deals with this issue.

It is instructive to examine the item difficulties on the norming and operational administration of the Arts placement test. Some very important questions can be addressed - among them are the following:

1. What structures are so easy for entering students that they need not be taught?
2. What structures are so hard for entering students that they need special emphasis?
3. On what structures do enrolled students have a definite advantage over entering students?
4. On what structures is the reverse true?
5. On what structures is no progress made? Are these structures particularly hard or easy for both groups?

6. How well correlated are the item difficulties for entering and enrolled students?

7. How does the average item difficulty compare for each group?

By analysing the data related to item difficulty it is hoped that these questions will be at least partially answered. In sum, an analysis of item difficulty should provide information on how successful the Arts EFL curriculum is in teaching various grammatical structures.

The basic date is provided in table I. It contains a list of 48 out of the 60 grammatical structures that appeared in the grammar/structure section of the norming and operational administrations. 12 items are not included because they were changed from one administration to the next. In table I, the most important statistic is the P+ value. This is the number of people answering correctly divided by all the people who attempted the item. For example, 17 percent of the people in the norming administration (enrolled students) answered item 1, Gerund in Object Position, correctly. The Δ (delta) value conveys the same information as P+. However, it is the P+ value transformed to an equal interval scale. This is necessary because P+ values, not being equa-distant from one to the next cannot be added, subtracted, multiplied and divided. These operations can be performed on Δ values and therefore they are represented in table I.

From table I, we can discern certain trends. These trends provide information necessary to answer some of the questions posed earlier. One trend is that the order of item difficulty for the norming and operational administrations is roughly the same. The results of a Pearson product-moment correlation between the Δs for the norming and operational administrations yield r = .78. This is significantly different from zero, i.e. there is a correlation between the difficulty orders.

TABLE I

ORDER OF ITEM DIFFICULTY[1]

NORMING AND OPERATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

ELU ARTS PLACEMENT TEST

GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE	NORMING		OPERATIONAL	
	P+	Δ	P+	Δ
1. Gerund (Object Position)	.17	16.85	.28	15.36
2. had better	.21	16.25	.30	15.11
3. Present Perfect Continuous (Affirmative)*	.23	15.94	.26	15.63
4. Copula (WO+AUX in WH Q/ Past Tense)*	.28	15.37	.29	15.17
5. Reduced Relative Clause	.32	14.86	.35	14.51
6. Present Perfect (Affirmative)*	.33	14.78	.28	15.34
7. Future Tense (WO+AUX in WH Q)	.35	14.58	.34	14.65
8. Adjective Formation (bureau/bureaucratic)	.37	14.38	.45	13.51

GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE (Contd.)	NORMING		OPERATIONAL	
	P+	Δ	P+	Δ
9. Quantifier with Mass/ Count Noun*	.38	14.22	.24	15.86
10. Quantifier with Mass/ Count Noun*	.35	13.99	.33	14.72
11. For/Since Phrase with Present Perfect*	.44	13.56	.44	13.60
12. Copula (Past Tense in Yes/No Q)*	.44	13.56	.49	13.06
13. Past Perfect (Affirmative)	.45	13.55	.55	12.48
14. "Used to"*	.46	13.42	.41	13.96
15. "Going to" future tense*	.49	13.15	.32	14.86
16. Past Continuous (Affirmative)	.49	13.15	.56	12.41
17. Present Tense (WO+AUX in WH Q)*	.50	13.05	.38	14.25
18. Connector (Subordinating)*	.51	12.91	.62	11.78
19. Present Continuous (WO+AUX in WH Q)*	.52	12.82	.47	13.30
20. Present Perfect (Negative short answer)*	.54	12.65	.43	13.67
21. Present Continuous (Negative)*	.59	12.09	.40	14.01
22. Parallelism	.59	12.06	.55	12.54
23. Adverb (Irregular)*	.60	12.04	.51	12.89
24. Passive (Past/Affirmative)	.60	11.94	.66	11.39
25. Connector (Subordinating)*	.69	10.99	.81	9.52
26. Present Perfect (Aux in Negative)*	.70	10.94	.77	10.01
27. "There" (Subject in Yes/ No Q)	.71	10.79	.66	11.31
28. Modal (Can)*	.72	10.68	.70	10.89
29. Comparative Adjective*	.72	10.71	.64	11.61
30. VP Complement (to + infinitive)	.72	10.68	.71	10.78
31. Present Perfect (Verb in Yes/No Q)*	.72	10.62	.70	10.88
32. Predicate Adjective*	.73	10.54	.79	9.81
33. Present Tense (Aux in Negative)*	.76	10.18	.55	12.54
34. Present Tense (Aux in Yes/No Q)*	.76	10.20	.59	12.07
35. Past Tense (WO+AUX in WH Q)*	.76	10.19	.62	11.76
36. Past Tense (Negative)*	.77	10.11	.83	9.15
37. Superlative Adjective*	.78	9.93	.76	10.20
38. Present Tense (Affirmative)*	.79	9.77	.70	10.93

GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE (Contd.)	NORMING		OPERATIONAL	
	P+	Δ	P+	Δ
39. Future Tense (Negative in short answer)	.80	9.71	.84	9.03
40. Present Continuous (short answer)*	.81	9.46	.65	11.47
41. Connector (Coordinating)*	.82	9.31	.84	9.0
42. Copula (S-V agreement)*	.85	8.77	.78	9.98
43. Adverb of frequency*	.87	8.41	.82	9.38
44. Present Tense (Short answer)*	.88	8.21	.83	9.92
45. Past Tense (Affirmative)*	.88	8.39	.89	8.19
46. Copula (SV Agreement in Yes/No Q)*	.90	7.87	.85	8.85
47. Copula (SV agreement)*	.91	7.76	.94	6.65
48. Copula (SV agreement)*	.93	7.11	.92	7.34

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[1]Structures are listed from most difficult to easiest.

*All starred (*) structures are taught in the Arts curriculum.

1. The abbreviations used are the following: WO - Word Order
   AUX - Auxiliary Verb
2. Q - Question
   SV - Subject Verb

Overall, there was no significant difference between enrolled versus entering students in their abilities to handle all the listed structures. The average Δ value for enrolled students was 11.72. For entering students it was 11.99. This indicates that enrolled students did slightly better than entering students on all items. However, when tested for significance it was found that this difference rested well within the limits of chance variation. Statistically speaking, the difference was insignificant.

A look at specific structures also yields important information. Entering students had the most trouble with the following structures:

TABLE 2

DIFFICULT STRUCTURES FOR ENTERING STUDENTS

		P+
1.	Quantifiers with mass/count nouns	.24
2.	Present Perfect Continuous (Affirmative)	.26
3.	Gerund (Object Position)	.28
4.	Copula (WO+AUX in WH Q/Past Tense)	.29
5.	"had better"	.30
6.	"Going to" future	.32
7.	Future Tense (WO+AUX in WH Q)	.34
8.	Reduced Relative Clause	.35

When the P+ values for these structures are corrected for guessing their values approach zero. This means that almost none of the entering students could handle these structures.

Enrolled students also had a lot of difficulty with these structures. In fact, with the Gerund in the Object Position and the modal "had better" enrolled students did significantly worse than entering students at the .05 level of significance. In effect, any difference of .07 or greater in P+ values is due to chance factors only one time in 20. When the difference increases to .11, as in Gerund in Object Position, the chance of this difference being spurious decreases to less than 1 in a thousand.

Enrolled students did better on some of these structures. They evidenced noticeably better skill in handling the "Going to" future tense and "Quantifiers with mass/count Nouns." This is probably due to learning occurring in the Arts English classes. With the other structures the difference was not significant at the .05 level of significance.

There were a fair number of items entering students had little difficulty with. These are:

TABLE 3

EASY STRUCTURES FOR ENTERING STUDENTS

		P+
1.	Copula (SV agreement)	.94
2.	Copula (SV agreement)	.92
3.	Past Tense (Affirmative)	.89
4.	Copula (SV agreement in Yes/No Q)	.85
5.	Future Tense (Neg. in short answer)	.84
6.	Connector (Coordinating)	.84
7.	Present Tense (short answer)	.83
8.	Past Tense (negative)	.83
9.	Adverb of frequency	.82

Enrolled students also had little difficulty with these items. In fact, there was no significant difference between entering and enrolled students in their ability to handle them. It is suggested that since these are fairly easy structures and since Arts students don't seem to improve on them, the teaching of them be abandoned. Entering students know as much as they are going to learn about them on the first day of class.

Structures in the middle range of difficulty are, by and large, handled equally well by both groups of students. The exceptions are listed below:

TABLE 4

STRUCTURES HANDLED BETTER BY ENROLLED STUDENTS

	STRUCTURE	DIFFERENCE IN P+ VALUE
1.	Present Tense (WO+AUX in WH Q)	.12
2.	Present Perfect (Negative in short answer)	.11
3.	Present Continuous (Negative)	.19
4.	Adverbs (Irregular)	.09
5.	Comparative Adjective	.08
6.	Present Tense (AUX in negative)	.21
7.	Past Tense (WO+AUX in WH Q)	.14
8.	Present Tense (Affirmative)	.09
9.	Present Continuous (short answer)	.16
10.	Copula (SV agreement)	.07

These structures plus the ones mentioned earlier, Quantifier with Mass/Count nouns (difference = .14) and "Going to" future (difference = .17) are the ones in which Arts students demonstrate the most improvement. It seems as though not only the simple present, past and present continuous tense are being learned but also word order and the auxiliary verbs that accompany each. Once again, the most probable cause for this difference is the learning occuring in the Arts EFL classrooms.

There also seems to be evidence of backsliding. On the following structures enrolled students did significantly worse than entering students.

TABLE 5

STRUCTURES ENROLLED STUDENTS HANDLED WORSE THAN ENTERING STUDENTS

STRUCTURE	DIFFERENCE IN P+ VALUE
1. Adjective formation	- .08
2. Past Perfect (Affirmative)	- .10
3. Past Continuous (Affirmative)	- .07
4. Connector (Subordinating)	- .11
5. Connector (Subordinating)	- .12
6. Present Perfect (Aux in negative)	- .07

These structures plus the two mentioned earlier, Gerund in object position (difference in P+ = -.11) and the modal "had better (difference in P+ = -.09) are the ones on which Arts students demonstrate backsliding. The most serious, I believe, are the connectors. Subordinating connectors, since they are essential for discourse level comprehension, (Burt and Kirpatsky, 1977) should receive more stress. Of the others, a decision should be made as to whether they need to be emphasized given the limited amount of time available in ELU Arts classes.

In sum, Arts students seem to do slightly better on these structures than entering students. They handle 14 items better but only 8 worse. Though the difference is not great it is noticeable.

Before accepting the conclusions drawn from this data it is prudent to make some qualifications. First, item difficulty may be item specific for some items and therefore not generalizable to the structure it focuses on. Second, it has been assumed here that entering and enrolled students are comparable. This is only true if both groups had the same abilities upon entering the university. This assumption may not be valid. Third, the cumulative P+ values are not those of existing Arts students but for all enrolled students, some of whom had been in the program for only 4 months while others had been in it for a year and a half. If only finishing students had been examined, the differences noted would probably have been greater. Notwithstanding these qualifications, I think the data presented shed some light on the ELU Arts program and should be considered in future course or program changes. More data will be available next semester (as a result of the new form of the Arts placement test presently being developed) which will shed further light on the conclusions drawn in this paper.

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A MODEL FOR STUDENT EVALUATION OF AN ESP PROGRAM

By Patricia A. Hines
ELU - Engineering

In 1975 the studies program at the College of Engineering was inaugurated with a presemester, 15-hour non-credit English course. Since the Engineering program of studies had not been established at that time, the content of the English course, which was to prepare the students for these studies, was based on purely theoretical assumptions of student needs and faculty expectations, rather than actual data pertaining to the specific situation. By spring 1978 this class of students had completed 5 semesters of Engineering/Science courses and were deemed sufficiently able to evaluate, by means of a questionnaire, the scope and the value of the English program they had completed in the fall of 1975.

Prior to this time, informal surveys had been conducted in each course within the program. These informal questionnaires were unsuccessful as an indication of the worth of the English program for several reasons.

First, the students answered the questions in an academic vacuum. At the close of the first English course students had completed only 3 credits of an Engineering/Science course. At the close of the second course students had usually completed 15 credits at most, occasionally less. Since, in order to graduate from the Engineering College a student must attain 144 credits, we were asking the students to make a judgement based on not more than 10% of the total courses they would take. Such an evaluation, based on a small sample, could not be an accurate indication of the worth of the program.

Secondly, in regards to the first course students, this evaluation was tinged with emotionalism. Many of these students had come to the University to study Engineering, only to find that they were to study English for one semester. The fact that these hours were 'useless;' i.e., non-credit, did not aid in alleviating this emotionalism.

The resentment this produced usually reached its height during the last few weeks of classes, the time when our informal questionnaires were usually given. This resentment often led to non-constructive criticism such as, "I learned nothing."

Although statements such as these could have been true, we considered them to be of doubtful validity in view of the fact that many of the most vociferous objectors would in later semesters tell us how helpful the course had been.

Thirdly, the questionnaires themselves were often unprofessionally prepared. Since no one on the staff had received proper training in the formation of a valid questionnaire, we would write questions such as, 'What did you like about this course?', and receive replies such as, 'The teacher was very kind.', which although flattering to staff members, were somewhat unproductive in terms of course revision.

By second semester 1977/78, we were still conducting the program based on assumptions rather than facts and the need to remedy this situation became apparent. The task was undertaken and divided into 3 stages:

- selection of information to be placed in the questionnaire
- formation of the questionnaire
- distribution of the questionnaire
- evaluation of the questionnaire

SELECTION OF INFORMATION

Students and faculty members were both consulted in formal meetings in which course-specific questions, formed by staff members, were discussed. These questions dealt with an evaluation of course materials and the manner in which these materials were presented. The purpose of these meetings was not only to answer the questions, but to elicit additional questions, by means of discussion, which could be placed in the questionnaire. For example, in discussing items written by the co-ordinator of the oral/aural course, it was discovered that many of the students felt that additional oral skills should be developed. This led us to draft a question concerning the desirability of an upper level English elective course that would deal primarily with conversational situations that they would meet as engineers in the field.

FORMATION

During this time, the services of the Office of Tests and Measurements of the Language Centre became available to all Units. With the aid of this office and the lists of questions culled from the meetings, a questionnaire was drafted. The questionnaire was divided into 4 sections:

- background information
- evaluation of present performance in Engineering/Science classes
- evaluation of specific activities within the English program in regards to usefulness to Engineering students
- evaluation of proposed changes within the English program in regards to usefulness to Engineering students

The questionnaire contained a total of 86 questions. Several cross-tabulations were created in order to determine the validity of replies. Students were classified into one of 8 categories, according to department, number of credits earned and courses taken within the English Unit.

DISTRIBUTION

We desired only those students who had completed all the required courses offered by the Unit to complete the questionnaire. Since these students were no longer attending classes, we had to rely solely on the good will of the students to obtain, complete, and return the questionnaire. Good will proved to be non-existent in the face of other academic pressures. Ultimately close to 300 questionnaires were distributed, but only 75 were returned - a rather sad ending to over 5 months of hard work.

The problem has now been solved, for next semester the questionnaire will be distributed and completed in the final English course offered. All students in this class have obtained at least 54 credits. Although this is not an ideal situation, it seems to be the only one at present.

EVALUATION

In view of the fact that 75 students completed the questionnaire and that a first computer run of only 51 exists, it is rather difficult to make statements about the program.

However, a few trends can be noted:

- Approximately 25% of the students consistently answered negatively when asked questions about their ability to function in the English medium classroom. Interestingly enough, 29% of the students who completed the questionnaire received a grade of C (below average) or less in English.
- The specific course topics which received the most negative response (i.e., not very useful) were the writing of definitions and classifications. One of the most positive responses (i.e., more time should be given) was for the writing of physical and process description of devices.
- Over 70% of the students felt that guided Engineering/ Science lectures should be given in the English classroom.
- Over 70% of the students felt that the difficulty of the materials, in terms or science content, need NOT be increased.

CONCLUSION

The usefulness of the questionnaire has been delayed by distribution problems, but next semester, when it becomes a permanent part of the final course, we shall have an accurate on-going evaluation of our program and how it serves the needs of the students. Such an evaluation should be an integral part of all programs which service English medium faculties.

GAMES TEACHERS PLAY

by Dr. Maria Al-Salem
ELU - Commerce

This idea has proved useful (and on some uninhibited occasions even entertaining) as an oral review of basic conversational forms.

The technique is to distribute standard file cards, each of which contains directions for one specific oral task. Each card is different, with varying degrees of difficulty. The students are directed to read their cards aloud and then comply with the written directions. These directions may range from very basic (1. "Ask your neighbour on the right what his major is") to fairly complex (2. "You failed to stop at a red light. What will you say to the policeman now approaching you?"). For a bright class, the cards can be used, as example 2 above, to promote more sophisticated and unprogrammed replies. For more elementary levels the cards can effectively drill basic grammar skills.

In the latter case, the student's performance can be made self-correcting. Before beginning, the teacher can instruct the class that in cases where the cards involve 2 people (3. "Ask someone for directions to the bookstore" or example No.1 above), no answer should be given until the question itself is correctly phrased. Thus student B would not give directions until Student A's request was accurately stated.

Besides making students aware of their own mistakes, the teacher can expand on the cards by involving a third student (C) The teacher can ask student C, "What did student A say?" thus prompting practice in 3rd person and reported speech.

The cards, then are useful for several reasons. They can be used over and over, since a student can be given a different card each time. The questions can be adapted to the needs of each class in any of the Units. Then, given the fact that free conversation periods usually benefit only the proficient and/or garrulous students (who need it least anyway), playing file card games provides a minimum structure for oral practice for all.

TEACHING CONVERSATION

By William Starkey
ELU - Engineering

The purpose of this article is to describe briefly an approach to teaching an advanced course in conversational English in the Evening Program. The article includes a description of the course, the students enrolled; the materials used and their application in a typical lesson plan, and some concluding observations.

Conversation, Level 3

C-3 is a course in English conversation for advanced students. Its main objective is to increase fluency through actual conversation centred around topics for discussion, debate, etc. Conversation-like (and other) activities such as dialogues, learning idioms, pronunciation drills, etc. are also featured in the course as a minor component. C-3 meets twice a week for 1½-hour sessions for about 13 weeks. The maximum number of students allowed is (now) 16.

The Students

The profile of a typical C-3 student would be as follows: man or woman; age 30; middle class background; occupation - (housewife, clerk, teacher); wants to improve oral/aural fluency in English for work or travel. What each student expects from a "conversation" course varies somewhat. Some expect a course "about" conversation i.e., working through a textbook with lists of idioms, dialogues, pronunciation drills, and illustrations of Ahmed's trip to New York. Others expect a "language club" type atmosphere featuring free discussion on topics of interest. C-3 attempts to accommodate both.

The Materials

C-3 materials are a potpourri of current newspaper and magazine clippings (articles, cartoons, ads); A/V paraphernalia (films, slides, tapes, photographs, maps, pictures, objects); pirated excerpts and adaptations from popular grammar texts (Krohn, Praninskas, etc.); and the 2nd half of the course text, SAY IT THIS WAY by L.W. Leavitt.

Application of Materials - the typical lesson plan

Since the classes are long (one hour and 30 minutes with no break), each class is divided into three distinct activities:

A. the warm-up

B. The mini-lesson

C. Conversation activity

A. The warm-up (10-15 minutes)

The warm-up consists of giving the students a brief article from a newspaper or magazine which one of them reads aloud and the others comment on. Often, at this point, a full discussion blooms which carries the activity further than planned. The instructor, however, makes no attempt to put on the brakes, but lets the topic wilt of its own accord before proceeding to the next activity. The purpose of the warm-up is threefold: 1) It allows stragglers to arrive late and not miss out on anything crucial. 2) It helps to remove the cobwebs of the work-day and to get the students thinking in English. 3) It establishes a conversational atmosphere for the rest of the evening.

B. The mini-lesson (15-20 minutes)

The mini-lesson serves the dual function of being (1) a syntactic, phonological, and semantic repair service, and (2) a source of student motivation. C-3 students, though generally fairly fluent, seem to make the same mistakes repeatedly when speaking English. Since they do not live in an English speaking community, they do not receive enough exposure to native spoken English to sense that they are often using incorrect idiom. The class ratio of one instructor to 16 students is not sufficient exposure either. The instructor, to make up for this lack of exposure, tunes in to student errors, categorizes them, and attempts to deal with them in the mini-lesson of each class.

For example, even advanced, fluent students will often ask Wh-questions omitting "do/does". ("Teacher, what means 'surname'?") or "(why they want to see this?"). The instructor attempts to eliminate this (and other kinds of) error by (1) calling the students' attention to it, explaining why it is wrong giving the correct grammatical form), and (2) practising the correct form using exercises from photocopied pages of a standard ESL grammar text, in this case, Krohn's English Sentence Structure, Lesson 4, Part A.

The second reason for the mini-lesson is that it helps to increase student motivation. Some students prefer "conversation-like" activities to conversation itself. These are students who need to consciously know that they've learned something in each lesson. If they can walk out of each class with a bagful of new words and grammar rules, they feel satisfied and motivated to continue.

C. Conversation activity (45-60 minutes)

The conversation activity is the main part of each class. It is designed not only to stimulate conversation, but also to bring variety to the class. Conversation activities include the following:

1. Informal discussions on a chosen topic
2. Planned debates (following the procedure outlined by Jim Herbolich. (See Al-Manakh, Vol.2, No.2)
3. Films (followed up with discussion)
4. Informal (prepared) talks
5. Activities: (music/slide presentations)
6. Language games
7. Role Playing exercises

The topics for discussion, debate, etc. as closely as possible correspond to the interests of the group (which are determined by means of a questionnaire given on the first day of class.) The instructor participates in, but never dominates any of these activities, and it is a cardinal rule that the free flow of conversation must never be halted to correct a student error. Even students who ask to be stopped in mid-sentence and corrected, actually resent it as a rude intrusion. Subtle methods are used to replace error with correct idiom as the following example illustrates:

Wisam: "... then, when I look to the sky, I see the flying saucer all make like shine."

Instr.: "Incredible, Wisam, you really saw a flying saucer shining in the sky? Was it day or night?"

Wisam: "I think maybe it was night. The light was come from inside the flying saucer to outside."

Instr.: "Oh, I see, you mean that the light came from the saucer itself. It was glowing like the way this light is glowing (points to ceiling light).

Wisam: "Yes, it was glowing like that and ..."

"Touchy" areas, especially politics and religions, are generally avoided. Experience has taught the instructor that a highly emotional discussion will take place in Arabic rather than English.

Concluding observations

C-3 students who persevere to the end of the course are generally highly motivated, good students, but are often overly critical of their own ability to converse fluently in English, and seem to forget that their present fluency in English is no mean accomplishment. What they need is exposure and more exposure. The instructor often exhorts them to take every opportunity to be around English by taking advantage of English films at the cinema and on T.V., by attending programs at the British Council and the U.S. Embassy; by reading books (comic books), magazines, newspapers etc., by having lunch at the Hilton and eavesdropping in on conversations - anything to give them exposure. Homework assignments have them finding up native speakers of English and getting jokes and stories out of them, and taking notes (outside of class) recording snatches of conversation, words, etc. they've heard but don't understand. In class, they are encouraged to use the instructor as a model, imitate his gestures, pronunciation, etc. and never let anything he says go by half understood.

THE ACQUISITION OF TECHNICAL VOCABULARY

Diana E. Adams-Smith
MSSD, Faculty of Medicine

In a recent article in the British Medical Journal a student points out that acquiring proficiency in medicine now means accumulating a vocabulary equal to that of four distinct sub-languages. "The medical language", he says, paraphrasing Illich, "has become a major threat to medical education."[1] Since acquiring technical vocabulary is such a problem for native speakers - and this is not a problem restricted to the medical field - it is evident that it must loom much larger for students of English as a second language. Yet the old pattern of alphabetical word lists heading each chapter in a textbook has become generally unacceptable. There is a tendency to teach vocabulary only when driven to it, apologetically and with a guilty look over the shoulder. Much of the English teaching profession has become word-shy. Phil Skeldon calls this "lack of a coherent approach to vocabulary...one of the weaknesses of currently published materials", and emphasises the need for overt vocabulary teaching.[2]

An investigation of a number of texts written for ESL students was carried out in order to determine how the authors set about the problem of teaching vocabulary in general and technical vocabulary in particular. Books examined included Practice in Medical English by Kenneth Methold and Chuntana Methold (London: Longman, 1975); English in Focus: English in Basic Medical Science by Joan Maclean (London: O.U.P., 1975); Special English, Book I: Nursing by Donald Dallas (N.Y. and London: Collier Macmillan, 1971); Scientifically Speaking: An Introduction to the English of Science and Technology, ed. B.C. Brookes (London: B.B.C., 1971); The Scientist Speaks: The English of Science and Technology (B.B.C./British Council, 1967), and The Language of Hospital Services in English by Gretchen Bloom (N.Y.: Regents, 1976).

Practice in Medical English[3] contains a selection of reading passages followed by alphabetical lists of words with phonetic equivalents and meanings. The exercises on vocabulary are varied and include the use of synonyms for words in sentences (e.g. alleviate, indispensable), and the formation of different parts of speech from a base word, such as adjectives from nouns (medicine, hypnosis, biology), or verbs from nouns (demonstration, occurrence, development).

Although English in Basic Medical Science "does not aim at teaching vocabulary as such", it contains a number of paraphrasing exercises and some practice in the use of locative prefixes; e.g.

"The following are some common locative prefixes:

extra- (outside) sub- (below) intra- (inside)

Fill in the blanks in the right hand column.

1. fluid inside the cells _____ cellular fluid
2. pressure within the abdomen _____ abdominal pressure
3. subcostal _____ the ribs."

Special English: Nursing is "intended for nurses who need to... learn the new vocabulary and expressions they will encounter... Exercises give further practice in lexical items encountered in the unit... Special effort has been made to provide adequate repetition of words used with great frequency in the teaching of nursing English." There is a glossary but no vocabulary list for each unit. Exercises include blank-filling and using words in sentences to show their meaning.

In Scientifically Speaking "the most useful vocabulary items... are studied in detail." Words are examined in context, often in groups (e.g. to apply, application, applying, applicable, applications). Special attention is given to prefixes (e.g. thermi-, poly-) and suffixes (-ic, -al). Adjectives and related nouns are studied, e.g. during a discussion of properties of materials which gives brittle/brittleness, rigid/rigidity, flexible/to flex/flexibility and similar forms.

Each unit in The Scientist Speaks contains a word study, where half a dozen head words are introduced, discussed fully with their derived forms, and used in sentences.

e.g. "compress - press together
When a gas is compressed isothermally it obeys Boyle's law. A supply of compressed air may be obtained from a high-pressure cylinder or from a mechanical pump such as a compressor. Concrete sustains compression well, but fails in tension. The upper part of a horizontal bonded beam is in compression. Some substances are more compressible than others. All permanent gases are equally compressible.
Water is an almost incompressible fluid.

Exercises include sentence completion and the use of derived forms.

The Language of Hospital Services in English begins each unit with a glossary of special terms in which words and expressions used in the reading passage are defined. The vocabulary practice which follows tests the students' comprehension of the special terms and gives practice in their use (e.g. negligence, diagnosis, cardiology). In the reading passage, the terms occur again in context and are practised once more in the exercises for comprehension and discussion. "One of (the student's) three principal goals as a learner should be mastering vocabulary."

A somewhat arbitrary ranking of these materials in terms of the priority given to the teaching of vocabulary (highest to lowest) results in the following list: 1) The Language of Hospital Services; 2) The Scientist Speaks; 3) Scientifically Speaking; 4) Practice in Medical English; 5) Special English: Nursing; 6) English in Basic Medical Science. Such an arrangement may be disputed, since it is not easy to be objective when comparing materials as different in style as The Language of Hospital Services with its neat definitions and repeated opportunities for practising new lexical items, and the two B.B.C. publications, both intended to supplement radio or television teaching programmes, with their emphasis on the use and manipulation of a core of technical and sub-technical vocabulary. It should also be emphasised that this system of ranking is intended to focus attention only on a single point: the priority given to the acquisition of new lexis. For example, whereas English in Basic Medical Sciences has many strengths and might be an admirable text for a review English course for hospital

residents or other health professionals, any teacher considering it for use with a group without some prior knowledge of anatomy or physiology should be aware of the degree of lexical difficulty it presents.

It is very clear that little unanimity among teachers and materials writers exists as to the methods best suited to the teaching of technical vocabulary, or indeed the necessity for doing it all. But from the student's point of view the problem takes on a different dimension. At the end of the spring semester in 1978, an investigation was carried out among the second-year pre-medical students at Kuwait University to ascertain which methods of acquiring technical vocabulary they preferred and found most efficient. The following paper contains thirty new vocabulary items introduced A) in context, B) in a list with definitions, and C) using word roots and affixes. These papers were distributed, read through in class, and collected again a few minutes later after students had marked any word with whose meaning they were already familiar.

MEDICAL VOCABULARY

A.

1. If a physician wants to know how many white blood cells you have, he will ask for a leukocyte count.

2. When the stomach is so large that it crowds other organs, a condition known as megalogastria exists.

3. Some women in the early months of pregnancy suffer from excessive vomiting or hyperemesis.

4. When an organ or tissue that has developed properly wastes away or decreases in size, it is undergoing hypotrophy.

5. An adhesion is formed when two normally separate tissues join together.

6. After a bad cold, a patient may complain of an inflamed throat or laryngitis.

7. The word for pain in the head (which you may be suffering from by now) is cephalgia.

8. However, cephalgia is less serious than encephalomalacia, the softening of brain tissues.

9. Many elderly people, especially in cold wet climates, suffer from arthritis or inflammation of the joints.

10. Addiction means being drawn toward some habit. The person who takes drugs habitually suffers from drug addiction.

B.

1. hypertrophy - overdevelopment

2. erythroblast - embryonic red blood cell

3. xanthemia - yellow blood

4. anhidrosis - absence of sweat

5. tachycardia - rapid heart action

6. gynecoid - resembling women

7. ophthalmoplegia - paralysis of the eye

8. dyspepsia - poor digestion

9. nephritis - inflammation of the kidney

10. melanin - black pigment

C.

1. The word root megalo means enlarged;
acro means extremities (arms and legs).
So acromegaly means that the patient has very large hands and feet; his extremities are enlarged.

2. Megalomania is a mental condition in which the patient has a greatly enlarged opinion of himself (e.g., he thinks he is King Solomon or Napoleon).

3. derma(t) refers to the skin.
-itis means inflammation.
Dermatitis means inflammation of the skin.
Acrodermatitis means inflammation of the skin of the extremities.

4. -osis means condition.
cyan(o) means blue.
Cyanosis is a condition (usually resulting from lack of oxygen) in which the patient turns blue.
Acrocyanosis means blueness of the extremities.

5. Cyanoderma means blueness of the skin (usually from cold)

6. -tome (an instrument that cuts),
-ectomy (cut out),
-otomy (cut into),
-ostomy (cut an opening).

all come from the same Greek root -tom.
A microtome is an instrument for cutting very thin slices for an electron microscope.

7. The suffix -otomy means cutting into (or incision).
A duodenotomy is an incision made in the duodenum (perhaps to remove a growth from the inner wall).

8. -ectomy means cutting out or removal (excision).
The removal of a breast is a mastectomy.

9. -ostomy means cutting so as to form an opening. (osti = mouth or opening)
A surgeon who cuts a new opening into the duodenum is performing a duodenostomy. A gastroduodenostomy is an opening formed between the stomach and the duodenum.

10. cyto- means cell.
Cytology is the study of cells; a cytologist is the scientist who studies them.
leuko- means white.

Leukoderma means whiteness of the skin

NOTE: Please circle the number of any underlined word whose meaning you already know.

A week later a simple matching test was given, requiring the pairing of fifteen of these items with the best definition. At the same time the students were asked to evaluate the different methods which had been used to present new vocabulary during the four semesters of English courses they had completed.

ACQUISITION OF TECHNICAL VOCABULARY

A. Match the following by writing the number of the best definition beside each word in Column A. The first one is done for you. Note: You will not need to use all of the definitions.

melanin	20	1. poor digestion
hyperemesis	____	2. white blood cell
acrodermatitis	____	3. decrease in size or wasting away
tachycardia	____	4. overdevelopment
anhidrosis	____	5. condition in which patient turns blue
cephalgia	____	6. yellow blood
cyanosis	____	7. relating to women
xanthemia	____	8. absence of sweat
duodenostomy	____	9. rapid heart action
megalogastria	____	10. blueness of the extremities
dyspepsia	____	11. softening of brain tissue
encephalomalacia	____	12. inflammation of the skin of the extremities
gynecoid	____	13. removal of the duodenum
hypotrophy	____	14. excessive vomiting
leukoderma	____	15. enlargement of the stomach
megalomania	____	16. whiteness of the skin
		17. pain in the head
		18. operation to cut a new opening in the duodenum
		19. mental condition marked by delusions of greatness
		20. black pigment

B. New vocabulary items have been presented to you in four different ways during the English course:

1. Words given in sentences in a context that makes their meaning clear.

   e.g. Synergetic drugs are drugs that work together to increase each other's effects. The three muscles that work together to flex the forearm are called synergetic muscles.

2. A list of words with meanings.

   e.g. nasomental - pertaining to the chin and nose
   ankylostoma - lockjaw

3. The use of word roots or groups of related words.

   e.g. path(o) - disease
   pathologist
   pathology
   pathogen
   pathological

4. Sometimes the responsibility for identifying and looking up new words in reading passages has been left to you.

C. Rate these four methods of vocabulary acquisition according to the questions below.

   1 = words in context
   2 = lists with meanings
   3 = word roots or related words
   4 = student responsibility

I. The method of memorizing a new word that is

   a) fastest _____
   b) slowest _____

II. The method that helps you retain the meaning of the word (so that you still remember it a week later)

   a) best _____
   b) least _____

III. The method that extends your vocabulary (so that by learning one new word you can use this knowledge to understand many more)

   a) most _____
   b) least _____

IV. The method of learning new vocabulary that you like

   a) most _____
   b) least _____

v. Comments, suggestions, advice, complaints....._____

_____

_____

39 students took the test, the range of scores being 1 to 15 (possible score 15) and the mean 7.5. The results of the test showed no significant difference in student scores between the groups of words presented by context, by definition and by roots. However, although there was little difference in performance, there were interesting expressions of preference. The fastest method of memorizing new words was reported by 36% of the group to be by the use of context, and by 38% to be by word roots. The methods best for retention over a period of time were again context (30%) and word roots (41%); the worst was by word lists (51%). The method that extended vocabulary most efficiently was, predictably, word roots (76%), and least efficiently, words in context and word lists. The preferred method of learning new vocabulary was either by word roots (44%) or personal responsibility (36%); the least favoured was by word lists (46%).

Student Evaluation of Methods of Vocabulary Acquisition

	Words in Context	Lists with Meanings	Word roots	Personal responsibility
Fastest	14	9	15	6
Slowest	8	14	2	3
Best long-term retention	12	3	16	9
Poorest retention	5	20	1	10
Extends vocabulary most	1	2	30	7
Extends vocabulary least	11	18	2	5
Preferred	8	4	17	14
Least preferred	6	18	2	8

NOTE: Totals vary because students sometimes marked more than one option and sometimes did not mark any.

Several students added thoughtful comments. As might be expected in a group of Arabic speakers, they consistently emphasised the usefulness of the study of word roots and derived words. Some asked that more emphasis be placed on Latin and Greek word roots and affixes. "If they are translated into English, memorising and retaining the meaning will be much easier." That this predilection for word roots has implications for ESP materials developers and teachers in the Arab world has already been recognised by, inter alia, Paul Fanning and Bill Starkey.[4] It is familiar to any teacher who has seen a student, struggling for the meaning of an unfamiliar term, come up triumphantly with such etymologies as "before this century" for predatory or "something that turns in on itself, like a spiral" for invertebrate.

There was general student agreement that the best results in vocabulary acquisition come from a combination of methods. "Studying word roots is the best way but should be supplemented with definitions." "Using words frequently and in different contexts helps us best to recall them." Others advised active involvement on the part of the student together with the provision of reinforcement and practice by the teacher. "The best method is when the student looks up the meaning, and the teacher helps the student to pronounce the word and speak it in sentences." And finally, "the more one is involved in learning new vocabulary, the more he learns."

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